Exhibit No. 572

Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories

Métis Association of the Northwest Territories

"Political Genocide: Imposed Political Structures versus

The Dene Community Structure"

Summary of evidence of

George Erasmus and Larry Chedzie

before the

MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE INQUIRY

YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

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The Land Claim that the Dene of the Northwest Territories are making is not just a claim for recognition of Dene Aboriginal Title to the land but also a claim for recognition of political rights that are now being ignored by Federal and Territorial Governments. To illustrate the political genocide that is happening in the north today and to give you a better idea of what we mean by the phrase "imposed political structures versus Dene community structure", we're going to use Fort Smith as an example. Fort Smith is a community that we're familiar with, and a community where we have tried to work within the system. We want to describe the experience we've had and the conclusions which that experience leads us to in relation to the imposed political structure and the Dene community structure.

Fort Smith is a community, the southernmost community in the Northwest Territories, situated about a half mile above the Alberta border. It's made up of approximately 2,500 people. Approximately sixteen hundred of them are Dene, and twelve hundred are white people. This gives us approximately a sixty per cent native majority. The governing body that has been set up in Fort Smith to make local decisions was created not by the people of Fort Smith, but by the Territorial Government through its Municipal Ordinance. It has been designed particularly for the population of Fort Smith that have moved from southern Canada to Fort Smith. It's designed in a way that these people from southern Canada can get onto the municipal council and take part in it much more readily than the native population can.

As we see the municipal council, the political structure that is set up, it pretends to represent the community, but literally does not represent the community. It's made along the lines of southern thinking. This type of political structure would fit well into a southern community where people give the power to decide what happens to their community to eight or nine people.

This is what people from the south are familiar with. So the majority of the population is familiar with this type of structure; however, the majority of the population is not familiar with this type of structure and does not agree on the whole concept that the structure is based on. The native majority do not believe that eight or nine people should decide the future of the community. They believe that the future of the community should be decided by the community, by the long term residents who are the native people and the white people who have decided that they want to make Fort Smith their home and have an interest in the community other than monetary.

We would like to outline some experiences we've had with the present political structure. The best example we can give is the example of the municipal council elections that were held last December 8th in Fort Smith, where the native people tried to become part of the governmental system there.

The council is made up eight councillors and one mayor. Four of these positions were open on December 8th. Six native people ran for these positions and five white people ran. There were eleven contenders for the four councillor positions, and when the outcome of the elections were reached, three white people were elected to the Council and one native person.

Even though the native people of Fort Smith make up sixty per cent of the population, they did not come out to vote. There were a lot of problems in the election because a lot of the native people couldn't understand the procedure that was being carried out. A lot of the native population did not show up at the polling stations because this is not their way of deciding the future of their community. Native people do not go to the polls once a year to elect someone to decide their own future. The way the Dene of Fort Smith would much rather decide things is through a structure that is set up by the people themselves and

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that will meet their interest, the interest of the long term resident, the interest of the majority; instead of the interest of the minority and the transient population.

The outcome of the December 8th election, where one native person got on, was a real discouragement to the native people of Fort Smith who wanted to try to participate within the present political structure. They saw that there was little hope that they could take effective part in it even though Natives are a sixty per cent majority in the community. They could not get the proper representation on the municipal council, because it is a foreign system. Municipal council is not the way in which the native community of Fort Smith wish to have the future of the community decided. It is not the political structure within which they would like to decide their own future.

The situation in Fort Smith shows why the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and the Metis Association of the Northwest Territories have said "no major development before a land settlement". In Fort Smith you can see why this position has been taken. The people who are making decisions about development are not the people who should be deciding these things. The core of the community is not involved in the decision making process there. The majority is not involved in deciding what goes on. The different projects that are proposed for around Fort Smith and that area are being looked at by eight or nine people, and the decisions should not be made by these people.

That's why we're saying that there should be no major developments before a land settlement. Our rights to decide our own future through our own political institutions must be recognized first, so that we'll be able to take an effective part in the future of the North and be able to survive as a people.

APPENDIX A

WITNESS PROFILES

George Kurszewski

President, Fort Smith Local, Metis Association of the Northwest Territories

Gerry Cheezie

Chief, Fort Smith and Fitz Indian Band